

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HELP-SEEKING AND POSTTRAUMATIC GROWTH IN THE SAMPLE OF WOMEN SURVIVORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

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Abstract

Purpose – The body of research on Posttraumatic growth (PTG) in female victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) is limited. However, the existing research has consistently found that in comparison to other traumas IPV victims experience lower PTG.

Design/methodology/approach – Our objectives were to explore factors associated with PTG in IPV victims. We surveyed 134 18-65 years old ($M=35,9$, $SD=11,69$) women who have experienced intimate partner violence. The Composite abuse (Cronbach $\alpha=0,96$, $\chi^2(131)=185.70$, $CFI=0.94$, $RMSEA=0.06$) and the Economic abuse (Cronbach $\alpha=0,92$, $\chi^2(50)=82.35$, $CFI=0.93$, $RMSEA=0.07$) scales were utilized to evaluate IPV women suffered. PTG was measured by the Posttraumatic growth inventory (Cronbach $\alpha=0,96$), and the Social Constraints scale (Cronbach $\alpha=0,96$, $\chi^2(175)=284.23$, $CFI=0.93$, $RMSEA=0.07$) are self-report that were used to measure how women perceived others reactions to their IPV disclosure. Lastly, a list of individuals, professionals and organizations were provided in order to understand women’s help-seeking behaviour.

Findings – The results revealed that most of the women who experienced IPV did not experience PTG (28,2%, $N=31$) or experienced a very little PTG (28,2%, $N=31$). Regression analysis revealed that help-seeking from official sources acted as a PTG predictor. Greater PTG was more common among women seeking help from women’s NGOs, police than among those who did not. The vast majority of respondents (82%) experienced at least one social constraint when disclosing the abuse they suffered and it was positively associated with PTG.

Research limitations/implications - Due to the sensitivity of the topic and personal risks associated with interpersonal violence, the majority of research conducted on this subject is restricted to small sample sizes. In comparison to other publications with

samples on this subject, our sample size was moderate and demographically reflective of the community. However, it would be beneficial to reproduce the results on a bigger sample as it will allow for a more robust statistical analysis.

Practical implications – The results showed the importance to strengthen the availability and accessibility of help provision for women survivors of intimate partner violence, as this best predicts a higher PTG, therefore higher IPV victims’ psychological functioning. The prevalence of social constraints women experience reflects the unwillingness of our society at least to hear the women out and offer them the emotional support they need. Practitioners should take that into consideration as previous negative experience while disclosing the violence might influence a client-practitioner relationship.

Originality/Value – This research contributes to a rather small but growing body of PTG research of male perpetrated violence against women in intimate partner relationships, highlighting the importance of specialized help for the victims and their protection. Importantly, to our knowledge this was the first time the social constraints women experienced while disclosing abuse were measured.

Keywords: Intimate partner violence (IPV), Female Victim, Help-Seeking, Posttraumatic Growth (PTG)

Research type: research paper.